

Can ICTs Transform Society?



Maureen O'Neil
President, IDRC
Canada

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Transcript:

“The huge debate throughout history, in fact, has been how can the new capacities that we develop through technology, through new technologies, make a difference in the creation of a fairer world.

“This has been in the world of development, the post World War Two world, one of the big questions. In other words, if in the West, if in the North, depending how we characterize the developed countries, we are able to see our progress so related to changes in technology, how can – is it possible that those technologies through whatever means are going to have the same transformative power in poor countries?

“We’ve learned a lot about that question but we’re trying to learn more over the next few days.

“One of the things we’ve learned that is that it isn’t the technologies themselves which make a difference. In most cases -- we think back to the major technological advances -- it’s a society’s capacity to understand them, to use them within a framework that already is placing an emphasis on a greater equity in society.

“In other words, no technology, no technology in and of itself, is going to magically transform a society. That’s how we’ve thought.

“Now, why is it different with ICTs - or is it different with ICTs? – are the two questions we are addressing over the next couple of days.

“We think that they are different, that these technologies hold greater promise, because they can be applied by people who are attempting to make their societies more open, so that societies become more open and become more democratic.

“This will happen only if people take huge risks because no society becomes more democratic or more open without courage on the part of people to take risks, to take on the powers that be.

“So, how does this all mesh together? How do you -- how do you, if you are concerned about, worried about, have a role in, as the people here do, in thinking about how societies are going to become more open --how do you factor in the potential of this new, of these new technologies, which seem to hold huge, huge potential for supporting people who are trying to make their societies more open.”